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WAYLAND.

Written for the Library Prize by A.W. Cutting.

The Placid of the Town Which Gave Birth to the Idea of the Free Public Library

WAYLAND, Jan 9. In a quiet valley in the midst of Middlesex County, by a Placid river winding through its far-reaching meadows all surrounded by gently rising uplands and hills, lies one of the most beautiful and perhaps of the best known towns in eastern Massachusetts.

Until recently, cut off from steam communication with the outer world, the little village has quietly existed, its interests centered in itself, with no great thought of what might lie over the hills on either side out in the world. In this quiet nook the old-time life has lingered longer than some of its more ambitious neighbors, no factory pollutes its pure air, not a suggestion of manufacturing disturbs the serenity of its streets, save the clink of the blacksmith's hammer from the open shop door, or over in the brook valley a slumberous rumbling the little old gray water-mill buried under its willows by its woods-surrounded mill-pond, where, since the earliest days of the town of Wayland grists have been ground.

A farming community-the fine old meadows farms in many instances descending in one family from the Indian broad arrow mark of the first deeds. For 250 years some of these old names run through the town records and among the present officers of the First Parish are some names appear as founders of the first church, whose present beautiful old house has stood on its roomy enclosure under its noble elms for nearly 80 years- Wayland's elms are famous. On either side of its main street, and over nearly all its old homesteads, and as they lie throughout the town, the great elms of the grandfathers spread their branches with a beauty that no other tree knows.

BIRTHPLACE OF FREE LIBRARIES

Quiet and secluded as the little town has been, its influence has gone forth in many ways for good, and done much of which it makes no boast. Strong and beautiful characters have lived here and done their work for man-kind. Wayland is the birthplace of one of the noblest institutions, the free town library. Rev. J.B. Wight for 60 years pastor of the First Parish Church, while a representative to the general court in the year 1851, introduced a bill authorizing towns of Massachusetts to maintain Free Public Libraries, and in Wayland was started from a small nucleus- the present public library.

Dr. Francis Wayland, of Brown University, at a reception given in his honor in the town at this time, gave to the library a sum of money, making a good foundation for the splendid collection that now forms the chief pride of our town. Situated in the middle of the village, in finely appointed, commodious rooms in the building of the new town hall; rooms built to contain every requirement of it, as upwards of 10,000 volumes, its roomy, well-lighted reading rooms, supplied with periodicals, its museum of Indian relics gathered from the woods and fields of the town, making one of the finest collections of Indian stone utensils existing, its Revolutionary relics deposited here by townspeople for the benefit of all, and its portraits of the benefactors of the town, all make the Wayland town library are worthy of the pioneer free public library of the state. It is just to call attention to the debt it owes its

former veteran librarian; also the historian and antiquarian of the town, whose interest and labors have been so instrumental in bringing it to its present condition.

THE OLD YELLOW STAGE

For years after the railroad whistle was heard over the hills on all sides of the valley, Wayland had no means of communication with the outer world other than its daily stagecoach to and from Boston, bringing in the mail and the one excitement of the day. The old yellow stage with its creaking "through braces" and four horses made its leisurely progress through the shaded trees until four or five years ago. We remember the rotund white bearded old driver, who knew everyone, man woman and child in the place, and who was finally obliged to relinquish his reins owing to a tendency to fall asleep on his box, oblivious of the calls of would-be travelers. It is not long ago that the stage horn, blown on the crest of Moses hill as the stage came down into town at night, warned the townspeople to gather at the little one storied "Old Red Store" to get the mail; and they are not yet old who recollect old "Uncle Newell" as he sorted the mail as it lay on the counter before him, holding each letter up to the light with aggravating care, and slowly reading the whole address, perhaps adding a dry remark at the expense of sender or receiver.

But the opening of the Massachusetts central railroad through the town in 1881, swept away some of the old characteristics of the town and the old stage was the first to go. Now, with nine trains of the fine cars of the Boston and Lowell Railroad each day during the day, Wayland is brought within thirty-two minutes of Boston- moved up as it were, to be a suburb of the great city.

But beyond the luxury of the cars running through the town there is little change here. A quiet, peaceful little place it remains, with no occupations other than farms. However the beauty of the place-its river woods and hills are attracting people of means and refinement, and gradually our town is increasing its number of pleasant and beautiful homes.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

A visit to Reeves Hill-the highest of the Wayland hills- shows the town below spread out like a map. There in a cluster of elms is the village, its two church towers rising above the tree tops, the high school building, and the outlying farms, with their great barns and well-kept houses.. To the west of the town lie the water meadows, with the placid Concord winding like a thread of silver through their expanse. Then a bridge spans the river- the Island road" leading to Pelham pond, which we see sparkling to the south-west. Far off across the meadows we see the beautiful old stone arches of the "Causeway bridge" half hidden beneath the willows. From the rocky pasture where we stand, nothing rises between us and the blue New Hampshire Wachusett and Monadnock dominate in the west and north, while nearer the Sudbury, Lincoln and Waltham hills rise about us.

Down below the quiet old town with its pure air and water and its peaceful life. A visit to the old burying ground shows their result on the fathers of the town as recorded on the old gray stones. These tell the good old ages achieved by the sleepers below-many reaching far beyond four score- yes, fourscore and ten. A quiet old resting place this! A warm gentle slope to the south, surrounded by ever-murmuring pines. Here we see the

site of the first church, which we are told was of logs and built to serve as a defense against the Indians. Here the old gray stones- the oldest placed flat on the ground and deeply sunken in it- bear dates covering two centuries and a half. Gray moss hides the rudely cut latters, the tall brown grasses waive above and the blackberry vines trail across them, while the pines stand guard around. And in winter, when snow has softly covered all, the outstretched arms of the pines sink in yet closer protection over their charge below, quietly hushing every sound with their soothing voice, and bidding our fathers sleep on.

Alfred Wayland Cutting.